

NUMBER XIX.

FOR CONNECTING THE MISSISSIPPI WITH LAKE MICHIGAN THROUGH WISCONSIN, FOX, AND ROCK RIVERS.

A MEMORIAL to Congress in Relation to the Project of connecting, by navigable Channels through the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers, the waters of the Mississippi River with the waters of Lake Michigan.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled :

THE MEMORIAL OF THE LEGISLATURE OF IOWA RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS—

That the project of connecting the Mississippi river and Lake Michigan by navigable chaunels through the Wisconsin, Fox, and Rock rivers, appears to the legislature (your memorialist) to be one of vast importance to Iowa, to the North-west, and to the entire country. An oppressive sense of this importance is the only apology the legislature can offer for memorializing Congress in relation thereto.

Permit your memorialist to respectfully suggest a few of the reasons which, to the legislature, appear conclusive why the immediate execution of this project by Congress not only is, of vast importance, but is a necessity. Upon its execution may depend the safety of our northern frontier. No frontier is more assailable or more in need of protection from possible foes.

Great Britain occupies the northern portion of the continent, with a territory continuous with our own, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. She has constructed a series of short canals around the rapids of the St. Lawrence with locks forty-five feet wide and two hundred feet long and eight feet deep, and has connected Lakes Erie and Ontario by the Welland Canal, with locks twenty-six feet wide, one hundred and fifty long and eleven deep, and capable of ready enlargement. She has also constructed the Rideau Canal, professedly as a military work, by an interior route between Montreal and Kingston, with locks thirty-three feet wide and one hundred and forty-two feet long; and although the channel is only five-and-a-half feet deep, yet it is capable of passing a dangerous vessel when buoyed up by lighters. She has a formidable fortress and depot of military and naval stores at Kingston, on Lake Ontario; another at Malden, at the mouth of Detroit river, and a third at Pentanguishene, on Georgian Bay; besides forts more or less impregnable at Toronto, Niagara, Port Stanley, Windsor, and Port Sarnia. Most of these points are intersected by railways, by which a large force can be rapidly concentrated.

To oppose these formidable preparations we have a few dismantled forts, which a half-hour's cannonading with improved ordnance would batter down, and which from their weakness would invite rather than deter attack; no lines of water communication by which a war vessel larger than a canal boat can be thrown into the lakes; no naval or military depots; nothing but a single steamer of one hundred tons burden, mounting a single eighteen-pounder for aggressive or defensive purposes; nor can the number under the treaty stipulations of 1817 be increased beyond one more on the upper lakes, one on Lake Ontario and one on Lake Champlain.

It may be a startling fact, but it is nevertheless true, that a single battery planted on the Virginia side of the Ohio river below Pittsburg, and a single gun-boat anchored near the south shore of Lake Erie, have the power to sever the great arteries of communication between the East and West. The dreadful import of this fact becomes apparent when it is remembered that the annual wheat crop of the State of New York is hardly enough to feed her population for one-third of a year; while the annual wheat crop of the New England States is only enough to feed their population three weeks. The Committee on Canals of the Senate of New York and the Committee on Naval Affairs of the Senate of the United States having this project before them, have unanimously reported in its favor; the former by its report made on or about the 10th of April, 1862, and the latter by its report made on or about the 3d of March, 1863.

As a commercial measure, the execution of this project is no less a necessity. The products of the North-west for exportation have increased beyond example. The capacity of the present channels of commerce is insufficient to move them; while the cost of transportation is so great, that in some localities corn is used for fuel, and in most is converted into pork and beef before it can be forwarded. The product of grain, for example, has increased: that of Wisconsin from 36,000,000 bushels in 1860, to nearly 50,000,000 bushels in 1865; that of Illinois, 150,000,000 bushels in 1860, to 230,000,000 in 1865; that of Iowa, Minnesota, and other Western States, in proportion, quite or nearly as great, and yet only a mere fraction of the soil (estimated at one-eighth) is under cultivation.

The increase for years to come can not be less than in the years last past, and with it the cost of transportation will be increased, and the incapacity of the present channels of commerce become more apparent and ruinous.

By the execution of this project, vast sums now paid to middlemen will be saved to the consumer and producer; freights will be classified, giving to railways the exclusive control over certain classes of freight, and in quantity more than they can move.

Railway capital can not be imperilled, but if so, better the corporations than the people should suffer.

By its execution the entire country is benefited, not less the East than the West; not more by returns of commerce than by developing avenues of intercourse into bonds of unity.

The project which tends to unite by friendly bonds the remote parts of a country, can be no less national in character than that which guards against outward foes.

Your memorialist respectfully suggests that this work should be undertaken by the General Government. It can not be successfully accomplished by the States separately, and can not be undertaken by them even, as in most there are constitutional prohibitions against the incurring of State debt. As a national and military measure, its accomplishment is devolved, not upon the States, but upon the General Government. The navigable waters which it is proposed to improve and develop, and the carrying places between the same, are common highways, declared to be such by the ordinance of 1787, and are the class of navigable waters over which the General Government has invariably retained control, and to improve which it has long been its policy to make appropriations.

Your memorialist respectfully suggests that this work should be undertaken at this time, because the public debt is great. Its accomplishment will increase the wealth of the country, out of which the debt is to be paid, and will enlarge the incomes of the consumer and producer, by whom it is to be paid. At any cost, its early accomplishment is dictated by true economy. It will not cost a sum equal to the saving overland carriage on the movement seaward of a single crop.

For these reasons your memorialist invites your attention to this subject, and trusts it will receive early and due consideration. Be it therefore,

Resolved by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa, That the Governor be and he is hereby authorized and requested to affix his official signature thereto, and forward a copy of this memorial to the President of the United States, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and to each of our senators and representatives in the Congress of the United States.

Approved April 7, 1868.